

invention obvious for the reasons noted in the applicants' response of March 14, 2000. In particular, it is urged that the applicants' method as defined in the claims, especially as amended herein, provides unobvious results as shown by Example 1.

In rejecting the claims, the Examiner has stated that the "results presented in Example 1 have been noted and carefully considered, but are not deemed to be persuasive of patentability for claims 1-7, 9 and 10 because the conditions necessary to produce these results (i.e. Mg concentration less than 5 ppm; excess alkalinity 0.1 to 0.2; temperature 50 to 70°C) have not been recited in any of these claims".

Based on the Examiner's foregoing comments, it is proposed to amend claim 1 to specify an Mg concentration of less than 5 ppm and an excess alkalinity of 0.1 to 0.3 g/L alkali metal hydroxide, the excess alkalinity range being taken from claim 2. These amendments are thought to be responsive to the Examiner's comments and sufficient to emphasize the differences over the reference. The temperature range of 50-70°C mentioned by the Examiner has not been included in claim 1 as the applicants' method is thought to be less temperature sensitive than the 50-70°C range might indicate.


Notwithstanding the amendments to claim 1 and the foregoing comments, claim 7 has been amended to recite the slightly narrower excess alkalinity range referred to by the Examiner and the 50-70°C temperature range.

Claims 2 and 7 have also been amended to take into account the amendments proposed for claim 1.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims, as amended, bring in the essence of the features referred to by the Examiner in his comments on the results shown by Example 1. The claims, as amended, are believed to distinguish patentably over Nagy by defining a novel method which gives unobvious results. Accordingly, entry of this amendment with allowance is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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